

New H2Ohio Incentive Program Helps Improve Water Quality

COLUMBUS, Ohio – As part of Ohio Governor Mike DeWine’s H2Ohio initiative, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is offering a new incentive program to encourage farmers to aid in conservation and improve water quality. ODNR will be accepting applications for its Water Quality Incentive Program (WQIP) from Dec. 1, 2020 through Jan. 29, 2021.

“Improving Ohio’s water quality is incredibly important,” said Governor Mike DeWine. “Giving farmers an incentive to participate in this conservation process is another step toward clean water for future generations.”

The new program is being offered in combination with the Lake Erie Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). CREP is a USDA conservation program that offers farmers and landowners financial compensation for taking cropland out of production and establishing conservation practices. The H2Ohio Water Quality Incentive Program will offer a one-time payment of \$2,000 per acre for new Lake Erie CREP wetlands and forested riparian buffers (buffer strip with trees) to help improve water quality in the Lake Erie watershed. Wetlands and riparian buffers act as filters to reduce nutrient loading into waterways and help reduce flooding. Riparian buffers also stabilize streambanks to reduce soil erosion.

“This program gives farmers a unique opportunity to benefit the environment and themselves,” ODNR Director Mary Mertz said. “The program will let farmers boost Ohio’s environmental health while receiving fair compensation.”

To qualify for the H2Ohio Water Quality Incentive Program, interested farmers and landowners must be eligible for CREP and submit an H2Ohio WQIP application during the announced sign-up period prior to their CREP contract approval. Applicants do not have to sign up for CREP prior to applying for the H2Ohio WQIP. However, if the applicant is

approved for the WQIP, an approved CREP contract will be required to receive the WQIP payment. Applications will be scored and selected based on criteria to prioritize the best projects to improve water quality. For qualifying criteria click [here](#).

Farmers interested in more information can contact ODNR technical staff for additional program details, project planning assistance, and help with the application process. To contact an ODNR representative in your area click [here](#).

The new incentive program is one of several H2Ohio efforts currently underway by ODNR including the Forder Bridge Project in Paulding County, the Fruth Wetland Nature Preserve in Seneca County, the St. Joseph Confluence Reconnection in Williams County, the Van Order Wetland and Forest Restoration in Henry County, and the new wetland area east of the Andreoff Wildlife Area in Wyandot County.

H2Ohio is Governor Mike DeWine's initiative to ensure safe and clean water in Ohio. It is a comprehensive, data-driven approach to improving water quality over the long term. H2Ohio focuses on encouraging agricultural best management practices, restoring, and enhancing wetlands, and replacing home septic systems to reduce nutrients that contribute to harmful algal blooms. For more information on the H2Ohio initiative, please visit h2.ohio.gov.

ODNR ensures a balance between wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all. Visit the ODNR website at ohiodnr.gov.

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